583 and, if the woman's family is wealthy, a goat and formerly even a
431 slave. Nowadays, objects of European manufacture are also given.

To give the impression of being a great lord, an unusually
[563] wealthy family head sometimes gave human beings as a dowry. These were preferably Batswá or, if possible, dependents (Mpámá) who only changed masters up to a certain point. Actually it was the father's intention to glorify his daughter by turning them over to her; they had to assist her through various services, and her descendants became their "owners."

Thus Mpumo, one of the ancestors of the Boéndé (of the Bomwanja tribe) had received the slave, Bonkútulú, as part of the nkomí from Ikólé, father of his wife, [152] Lifomi of Mbúngá (Liókó, Ekonda). The descendants of this slave comprise the Bonkútambélá and Batsíha clan [sic], who have settled with the Bosánjo and the Bongangá. (1)

1. See also the example cited in Chapter III, Article V.

583 Even real estate can be included in the nkomí. Thus a fish-
431 ing territory (such as a stream, creek, pond, fishing holes) or a sec-
425 tion of a palm grove may be given (2). Like the gift of human beings,

2. But never land or forests.

such property is given only by a very wealthy family head. If he is not sole owner (and in practice he can be only in the case of fishing territory), he must obtain in advance the consent of the co-owners, whether they be brothers or heads of other families. Since it must be assumed that he is intelligent enough not to give away a piece of property which they themselves need, he always obtains their consent. In fact, anyone who opposed the gift would be considered to have acted maliciously toward the woman, who is also his "daughter," in depriving her of this source of pride.

The objects given as nkomí are the property of the husband. The greatest part of it he gives to his wife's nkólo, that is to the

583 × female relative thanks to whom he was able to obtain this wife (see
431 below, Article X). He keeps a small part for himself and, in agree-
425 ment with his wife, uses it according to his needs. When husband and wife are on good terms, he consults her before giving away or selling any of it. And if she wishes to dispose of any of it, she asks his permission. Thus they work the matter out amiably. But legally it all belongs to the husband. Should he want to use it for gifts or for any payment of his own, his wife can make no claim; she will not win her case before the law. But from a practical point of view, it is much wiser to come to an agreement in advance and thus avoid any annoyance
583 × or quarrel.

431 The size of the nkomɨ depends on the wealth of the woman's
[556] parents. Not only is a large one a point [152] of honor and esteem;
[593 ×] it is also a means of increasing the stability of the marriage and securing harmony. The bigger the nkomɨ the more obliged the husband is to treat his wife well and see that she is content with him, out of fear of having to return the entire fortune if the marriage should ever be broken.

The nkomɨ may be very large, even as great or greater than the bride price; in these extreme cases the girl is spoken of as
[192] lifaya-njoku, for like an elephant (njoku) she goes to live elsewhere (lifaya) because of all the riches she carries with her. The term njokwobwo is also used; literally, it refers to a kind of mushroom which grows in abundance all over the bosɑlɑ tree. (1)

1. The use of these terms is not specifically confined to the situation described above. They are also applied to any stranger who settles in, or simply passes through, the village, bringing many riches -- to the white men, for example.

556 With reference to this subject an old custom should be men-
583 × tioned. Because of his love for his daughter and a desire for renown,
431 a father might give his son-in-law a quantity of bakonga, in varying amounts but enough to pay for the acquisition of a wife, hence bride-price valuables, so to speak.